



October 19th, 2023

“Firearm Safety Education”

A proposed bill in the House and why YOU should co-sponsor it

Gun rights and gun control are very polarizing topics. They bring out the passion of many Americans in the argument of whether rights should be sacrificed for the idea of what some think will make us safer, and what others think are just “feel-good” measures that do nothing to deter crime or save lives. The statistics get played front to back, up and down the halls of Harrisburg’s capitol building.

Ironically, the goal of both sides of the argument amongst the general population are quite similar. The citizens of this Commonwealth want lives saved. We want innocent good people protected from the harms that violent criminals bring to those around them. And we want adequate care available to those in crisis. The methodology is what remains extremely different and so polarizing.

One thing that most of us agree on, though, is that children are the most valuable things in Pennsylvania. Their lives grow just teeming with potential and hope. They’re a bright spot in every citizen’s life, be they their own children, family, or even those we encounter in public places that often bring smiles to the faces of complete strangers. They’re one thing that practically every one of us would sacrifice our own lives protecting, especially law enforcement and the veterans of the land.

Can we all agree we can do something right now to protect them?

We often hear gun control advocates quoting statistics about accidental deaths of children, and pro-freedom advocates pointing out the skewing of those statistics by including young adults and criminal acts those young adults sometimes become involved in. What if there were a way to make children safer regardless of those statistics or the argument of safety vs. rights?

Representative Natalie Mihalek (40th legislative district) has proposed and is seeking co-sponsors for a bill that does just that. Our organization strongly believes that *one* great way to enhance people’s understanding of firearms, rights, and responsibilities is education. We spend countless hours writing papers, traveling to legislators’ districts and sportsmen’s clubs offering free seminars on the rights and responsibilities of the law-abiding citizen. Many of us are law enforcement, veterans, range instructors and sporting enthusiasts who volunteer time to educate those around us as we know it makes society a better place for everyone. It’s time the Commonwealth offers such education on basic firearms safety to children whom we all agree could benefit from simple programs. Programs that educate children on what to do when they encounter a firearm and similar curriculum that takes the curiosity away and replaces it with sound, safe guidance on how to react to the discovery of a gun. Surely both sides of the ever-present gun rights vs. gun control debate can agree education of youngsters will save lives.

We must also be honest with ourselves and understand that one class or one video may not be enough, as children need routine exposure to concepts to truly grasp them long term and learn to react appropriately when confronted with potentially dangerous scenarios, but these are our most valuable assets in the Commonwealth. Surely, they’re worth a small investment in our education system. Surely, they warrant proper safety training by qualified personnel even if it means it could save but a small portion of lives. Some don’t believe this will matter. Again, the polarized sides of the argument will hide behind statistics or arguments for or against the idea. So, I will refer to a very recent study that supports the idea.

*Support the
Bill of Rights
and the
2nd Amendment*

Jim Stoker
President

Klint Macro
Vice-President

Dale Brackin
Secretary/Treasurer

Board of Directors
Ed Bogats
Stephen LaSpina
Lisha Mihalko

FOAC-ILLEA
P.O. Box 308 Morgan,
PA 15064

Phone
412.260.4675

E-Mail
info@foac-illea.org

Est. 2020

A study done by researchers at Ohio State University this year (2023) found that safety videos DO, in fact, reduce children's unsafe behavior around guns. They studied 226 children ages 8 to 12. Some of the children were shown a one-minute gun safety video and others were shown a car safety video. One week later, those children were left alone in a room where two firearms were hidden for twenty minutes. Those children found the firearms 95.6 percent of the time. The children who had seen the gun safety video were much more likely to tell a trusted adult they'd found the gun, 33.9 percent against the 10.6 percent who hadn't seen the gun safety video. Over half of the children handled the guns, and those who had seen a safety video pulled the trigger only 9 percent of the time compared to 29.8 percent for those who hadn't.ⁱ

This study indicates that lives will be saved by gun safety education taught to our youth. This proposed bill puts that education where it should be, in the schools our children go to for their education. This can ensure no child is left uninformed to at least some level on this topic and it will save lives. In 2022 alone, if the percentage is applied to the more than 300 children who died age 11 and under this education would save roughly 70 more children.ⁱⁱ It can't be a one-time event though. Previous studies show following up the education as the children age is critical to the effectiveness. Is this not worth it?

In summary, our support for firearm safety education is based upon:

- Mutual respect for human life, especially those of our youth.
- The bill proposed WILL save young lives as is shown by recent studies of gun safety education with children.
- This bill can be enacted using our current education system with qualified trainers at minimal cost.
- This is a TRUE "common sense" approach to saving the lives of children across the Commonwealth.
- There are no rights violations or legal challenges to be made as both sides agree with the means and results.
- Increased chances that parents become more educated regarding safety and securing firearms *voluntarily* away from children.

For the reasons above and more, FOAC-ILLEA asks each and every one of our Representatives to co-sponsor this bill that unifies us all in purpose and will save lives. There is no legitimate reason to prevent safety education for our children. I'm asking this of you as President of FOAC-ILLEA, a military veteran, a 29-year law enforcement veteran, a father and a grandfather. Co-sponsor this proposed bill and get it passed into law.

If you should have any further questions or need clarification on the legality of the issues raised in this ILLEA White Paper, please feel free to e-mail us at info@foac-illea.org.

FOAC-ILLEA, P.O. BOX 308, Morgan, Pa. 15064

www.foac-illea.org

Respectfully,



J.R. Stoker Jr., President
jstoker@foac-illea.org

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2807325>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/child-killed?year=2022>